

this bill is reflective of President Bush's vision for education reform—to have the best education system possible to leave no child behind. And President Bush supports this bill—That's what this bill accomplishes. We all won on some issues and we all lost on some issues. But, in the best spirit of compromise, America's children win.

For instance:

H.R. 1 provides unprecedented flexibility and local control.

It is vitally important to cut federal education regulations and provide more flexibility to states and local school districts. We should give our educators the flexibility to shape federal education programs in ways that work best for our teachers and our students.

Flexibility allows school districts the ability to target federal resources where they are needed the most. This will ensure that state and local officials can meet the unique needs of their students.

H.R. 1 dramatically enhances flexibility for local school districts in two ways: (1) through allowing school districts to transfer a portion of their funds among an assortment of ESEA programs as long as they demonstrate results and through the consolidation of overlapping federal programs.

H.R. 1 enhances accountability and demands results.

As we provide more flexibility, we must also ensure that federal education programs produce real, accountable results. Too many federal education programs have failed. For example, even though the federal government has spent more than \$120 billion on the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) since its inception in 1965, it is not clear that ESEA has led to higher academic achievement. Federal education programs must contain mechanisms that make it possible for the American people to evaluate whether they work.

This bill provides accountability and demands results through high standards and assessments. And it provides appropriate responses to address failure. States will be required to test students in grades 3–8.

This provision has not been clearly understood.

It is important to emphasize that the states will develop their own standards and assessments. This bill does not dictate a national test. What the bill does is say that if you are going to accept federal education funding, then you are going to be held accountable for results. State test results are confirmed through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) or similar test, which would be required annually for grades 4 and 8 in reading and math. If a state improves on NAEP and their state assessments each year they will be eligible for rewards, and if it does not, there will be sanctions. We reward states and schools that improve. Those that do not improve will undergo corrective actions. Striking a balance between state and federal responsibility is the right approach to accountability.

H.R. 1 ensures that our schools are safe.

I am pleased that H.R. 1 includes provisions to ensure that schools have the resources they need to combat substance abuse and violence. An important element included here relates to work that I have done on the Committee, during both negotiations and markup. Namely, this bill provides resources to ensure that mental health screening and services are made available to young people. In addressing

school safety, we must ensure that children with mental health needs are identified early and provided with the services they so desperately need. Many youth who may be headed toward school violence or other tragedies can be helped if we address their early symptoms. I am pleased that this bill includes school-based mental health services language to ensure school safety and combat substance abuse.

H.R. 1 Promotes Reading First.

The bill also includes the President's Reading First Initiative, which awards grants to states that establish comprehensive reading programs anchored in scientific research. Obviously, in order to improve education we must start by ensuring that every American child can learn to read. States must be given both the funds and the tools they need to eliminate the reading deficit. Unfortunately, our schools have been failing our students on this basic aspect of learning. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, thirty-eight percent of fourth graders cannot read at a basic level—that is, they cannot read and understand a short paragraph that one would find in a simple children's book. Reading failure has devastating consequences on self-esteem, social development, and opportunities for advanced education and meaningful employment.

By funding effective reading instruction programs, this bill ensures that more children will receive the help they need before they fall too far behind. Better reading programs mean fewer children in special education and fewer children dropping out of high school.

VOTE FOR THIS BILL

Mr. Chairman, this bill represents true bipartisan compromise—a true compromise. Had I written this bill, it would look significantly different. But, I recognize that we cannot allow the perfect be the enemy of the good.

Is this a good bill? Yes.

Does it reflect the President's priorities? Absolutely.

Will it improve education in America today? No doubt about that.

There are issue areas where we genuinely disagree and will have the opportunity to debate in the coming days.

For example, I strongly oppose any efforts to eliminate the testing provisions of the bill, as this is the centerpiece of the President's plan for accountability. In addition, I strongly oppose the re-insertion of vouchers. Instead, I support this bipartisan compromise in its current form: it makes real strides towards improving education for ALL of our nation's children. As such, I oppose any amendments that would erode this compromise or divert us from our goal: to leave no child behind.

This bill takes a meaningful step towards leaving no child behind. I encourage all of my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK).

(Mrs. MINK of Hawaii asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Chairman, I said the other day I deeply appreciated the opportunity to be on the working group and commend the gentleman from Ohio (Chairman BOEHNER) and the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for the outstanding work that they did in pulling together the essentials for this legislation.

Mr. Chairman, this is a core bill. As we said in the debate on the rule, there were many things on our side that we wanted to have included: The construction provision and the reduction of class size were two paramount things that we will not be able to debate even during the amendment stage.

The reason that I support this bill, notwithstanding the many omissions, is because the compromise that was struck provided for a doubling of the title I funds. It seems to me that this is a crucial test of whether we are serious about this legislation. Let us not forget that title I is premised on the fact that it is to be targeted to poor children. The formula is based upon counting poor children.

So when we hear speeches to the effect that the States ought to be allowed to have the discretion to spend their money any way they see fit, it is a complete annihilation of the process that got us to the formulation of title I back in 1965, and that is to bring specific aid to the poorest schools that cannot finance their educational systems; and, therefore, every year fall further back.

School financing is based upon real property values, and there are many, many places in the country where property values are so low that they cannot fund education adequately compared to the rich and wealthier districts. Let us not destroy that principle by talking about taking the money and letting the States have the opportunity to spend it any way they wish.

Mr. Chairman, there are many other facets to this bill with which I believe improvements can be made; but fundamentally, if we are not able to fund it, we do not have a core agreement.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 1, which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for 5 additional years.

ESEA was passed in 1965 to help America's most disadvantaged children. These are our poorest children, who go to school in crumbling buildings, with outdated textbooks, few if any computers, little access to challenging, up-to-date curriculum, and a teaching force that is often overburdened, inexperienced, underpaid, and undertrained. These are children who have been left behind by the way we fund our schools—through local property taxes. The communities these children live in are often unable to raise sufficient funds to provide for the same high-quality education as in wealthier communities. States also provide resources for education, but don't do enough to eliminate this disparity and ensure every child in the State has equal access to the same, high-quality education. ESEA exists to close the gap in resources to the poorest schools, to provide them with the funds to build a foundation for a solid, high-quality education.

The bill we are considering today, H.R. 1 continues the efforts of ESEA. For one, recognizing that highly qualified teachers are crucial to ensuring that the most disadvantaged students have access to the best education possible, H.R. 1 provides additional resources to